



**Frederick County
Government
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News Release

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County Executive Gardner Raises Awareness of Significant Public Health Issues

Health Officer Brookmyer provides information on Zika virus . . .

FREDERICK, MD – Citing her responsibility to oversee the health and welfare of county citizens, Frederick County Executive Jan Gardner today addressed growing concerns about public health issues such as the Zika virus, the flu and heart disease.

“We’re seeing increased media coverage about the spread of the Zika virus and I want to make sure our citizens have the most accurate information,” said Executive Gardner. “There are steps our citizens can take to prevent the spread of this virus and precautions that can be taken, especially by pregnant women and those who have international travel plans. We have an obligation to our families, coworkers, and community to learn about the risks of this disease and to act to reduce them.”

The Zika virus is a disease that is spread primarily by mosquitoes. Typically, it results in mild symptoms that cause fever, rash, joint pain and red eyes, all of which go away after a few days to a week. What concerns many people are reports that link the Zika virus to a birth defect called [microcephaly](#) that appears to affect pregnant women exposed to the disease.

Currently, there were 52 cases of Zika in the United States, all of which were related to people traveling to infected areas. That number does not include the first case confirmed in Maryland, which was reported on February 11.

Executive Gardner invited Frederick County’s Health Officer, Dr. Barbara Brookmyer, to explain what the public needs to know about the Zika virus.

“Only one in five persons infected with the disease show any symptoms and most will recover with rest, fluids and fever-reducing medicines,” explained Dr. Brookmyer. “However, there is evidence that implicates the Zika virus to the birth of infants with smaller-than-usual heads. So, pregnant women and those traveling outside the United States should take

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precautions such as using insect repellants and wearing loose-fitting clothing that covers exposed skin. Also, with warmer weather around the corner, residents should plan now to remove places with standing water where mosquitoes thrive, such as flower pots, bird baths and garbage cans.”

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that women who are pregnant or are trying to become pregnant should avoid traveling to regions where Zika transmission is ongoing, specifically to Brazil and some other areas of South America. Anyone who thinks she may have been exposed should consult with her health care professional.

At Thursday’s briefing, Executive Gardner also discussed health issues citizen are more likely to encounter and steps to stay healthy: flu and heart disease.

While the flu season typically peaks between December and February, it’s not too late to get vaccinated for this flu season. “I got my flu shot last fall and the CDC continues to urge everyone six months of age and older to get the flu shot,” commented Executive Gardner. “You can also help to reduce the flu’s spread by practicing healthy habits such as washing your hands frequently, covering your cough and staying home from work or school if you are sick.”

Lastly, with this month designated as American Heart Month, citizens are encouraged attend Frederick Memorial Hospital’s free event called, “[Listen to the Rhythm of Your Heart](#),” on Friday, February 19, from 5:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. The event will be held at the Women’s Center at Crestwood, 7211 Bank Court, Frederick, Md., featuring health screenings, cooking demonstrations, counseling opportunities and fun exercise.

Additional healthy living habits will help fight off heart disease, such as eating a healthy diet, maintaining a healthy weight, staying active and drinking only in moderation.

The Health Department continues to monitor such diseases as the Zika virus and provides information to local health care providers and the community.

For more information, watch [today’s public information briefing](#) at www.FrederickCountyMD.gov/video, or visit the Health Department’s website at www.FrederickCountyMD.gov/healthdept or the CDC’s website at www.cdc.gov.

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